EVENING SERVICE

Special Candle-Lighting Service: "The Light of Life"

Note: This service was used for a Sunday evening in Lent and was sponsored by the Young People's Society, the pastor being Rev. Wallace H. Sterns, of Zumbrota, Minn. It proved so unique and impressive that he has made it available for other pastors and churches.

A chorus choir in vestments sang the hymns, the book used being the *Hymnal of the Christian Life* (A. S. Barnes & Co.). Probably suitable selections are in any good hymnals.

In preparation of the candles the arrangement was about as follows: Twenty wooden candlesticks about eight inches high were made, and two twenty-eight inches high, for the taper-bearers. On the pulpit platform, rear center, was placed before service a two-foot white candle about three inches in diameter. It was the "master candle" representing the light of Christ. On each side upon low benches were six candlesticks; the twelve to receive the candles representing the twelve apostles. At each side of the front of the church, facing two aisles, were placed pulpit chairs, and beside each a tall candle-holder. The pulpit was placed on the floor level at one side and was lighted by a dim desk light. There the pastor stood to read. Young girls in surplices stood at each entrance of the church and handed each person a small white Christmas candle.

After the offertory prayer and response the electric lights were extinguished and the reading began. At the words "Lo, the star" the electric star suspended over the organ was lighted by a switch. At the reading "I am the light of the world" two young women in surplices, one in each aisle and each holding a long lighted taper, passed up upon the platform from opposite sides and together lighted the master candle. They then seated themselves in the chairs and placed their tapers in the tall holders. After the reading "Handing on the light," twelve young men in surplices, six in either aisle, and holding twelve-inch candles, moved slowly forward and each in turn ascended the platform, six on each side, lighted their candles at the master candle, placed them in the holders prepared, and then seated themselves in the front pew. Following the song "Behold a Sower" four surpliced girls, holding candles, passed up the aisles and their candles were lighted by the tapers of the two candle-bearers. They then proceeded to the four corners of the church, each leaving her candle in the holder previously placed in readiness. At the words "Go ye into all the world," four girls, costumed to represent four nationalities, passed up the aisles, had their candles lighted by the tapers, and passed out of the church at the four corners.

At the conclusion of the hymn "More Light Shall Break," the two candlelighters with their tapers passed down the aisles and lighted the candles of those sitting in the aisle seats of each pew. These in turn communicated the light so that it proceeded from person to person.

When all lights were lit, and everyone, including the chorus, held a lighted candle, the congregation rose and stood while the choir sang "Send Out Thy Light and Thy Truth." The benediction was pronounced and the people filed out in quiet and reverence while the organ played the postlude.

The Service—"The Light of Life"

Voluntary
Processional No. 8:

"Christ whose glory fills the skies,
Christ the true and only light,"

Invocation:
Father of light, sun of the soul, who coverest thyself with light as with a garment, with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light. If we have turned aside to try the ways of darkness, lead us back, that the light that lighteth every man coming into the world, may shine clearer within us now.

Lord's Prayer and Response (threefold Amen).
Brief Address (interpreting the service).
Offering (offertory prayer and response).

Lights extinguished—Reading of the following:
Ps. 119:130; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 4:18; Ps. 97:11; Ps. 37:5-6; Isa. 9:2; 60:1-3, 19, 20.

Song, No. 161:

"The light along the ages
Shines brighter as it goes;
From age to age more glorious
~~Its radiant splendor grows~~
Man's life begun so lowly,
Now soars to heaven above.
To share in life eternal
The joys of endless love."

Coming of the Light of Jesus Christ—Reading of John 1:1-10.

Henry van Dyke with reverent imagination relates how one of the three wise men, Artaban, who had been looking for the signs of him who should come, first saw the light which he believed proclaimed the coming Lord.

Leaving his room, he crossed the hall, lifted the heavy curtain, and passed out upon the terrace on the roof.

The shiver that thrills the earth ere she rouses from her night sleep had already begun, and the cool wind that heralds the daybreak was drawing downward from the lofty, snow-traced ravines of Mount Orontes. Birds, half awakened, crept and chirped among the rustling leaves, and the smell of ripened grapes came in brief wafts from the arbors. Far over the eastern plain a white mist stretched like a lake. But where the distant peak of Zagros serrated the western horizon the sky was clear. Jupiter and Saturn rolled together like drops of lambent flame about to blend in one.

As Artaban watched them, behold, an azure spark was born out of the darkness beneath, rounding itself with purple splendors to a crimson sphere, and spiring upward through rays of saffron and orange into a point of white radiance. Tiny and infinitely remote, yet perfect in every part, it pulsated in the enormous vault as if the three jewels in Artaban's breast had mingled and been transformed into a living heart of light. He bowed his head. He

covered his brow with his hands. "It is the sign," he said. "The King is coming and I will go to meet him."

The Star Lighted—Reading of parts of Matt. 2:1, 2, 4, 9.

Hymn, solo:

"There's a beautiful Star" (Hymnal American Youth, No. 86).

Jesus, Light of the World—Reading of Luke 2:40; Mark 1:9-11; John 8:12.

Master Candle Lighted—Reading of John 12:35, 36.

Hymn:

"Light of the world, ~~thy beauty~~ the heart
~~Steals into every heart.~~"

Handing on the Light—Twelve candles lighted—Reading of John 10:1ff.; Matt. 5:14, 15.

Hymn, No. 291:

"Give light, O Lord, that we may learn
The way that leads to thee."

The Light Shed Abroad—Read Acts 1:6b, 8. The light carried to four quarters—Read II Cor. 4:5-6.

Hymn, No. 289:

"Behold a sower—from afar
~~He goeth forth with might.~~"

Light in Dark Experiences—Read Ps. 27:1; 37:6; 97:10-11, 23.

Hymn, No. 288:

"Lead, Kindly Light."

Love the Medium of Light—Read I John, 1:9, 7.

Hymn, No. 363 (and see "Through love to light" No. 22):

"O Jesus, Master, when today
I meet along the crowded way."

Light Through Missions—Candles to the nations—Read Matt. 28:19, 20.

Hymn, No. 384:

"The morning light is breaking."

More Light to Be Revealed.

When the Pilgrims to Plymouth embarked, their pastor, who could not accompany them, spoke these final words before they sailed upon the *Mayflower*:

"I charge you before God and his blessed angels, that ye follow me no further than I have followed Christ. And if God shall reveal anything to you by any other instrument of his, be as ready to receive it as you ever were to receive anything by my ministry; for I am confident that God hath more truth yet to break out of his Holy Word."

Hymn, No. 395 (Candles to everyone):

"More light shall break from out Thy Word
For Pilgrim followers of the gleam

Till, led by Thy free Spirit, Lord,
We see and share the Pilgrim's dream."

Choir sings "Send out Thy Light."
Benediction and Postlude.

P. S. There are so many excellent hymns with Light as the theme that no pastor can have difficulty in finding those appropriate in case he has not a copy of the hymnal mentioned.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Title: *Jesus' Testimony Concerning Himself.* Matt. 11:2-6, 25-30.

GOLDEN TEXT: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. 11:28.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Theologians write about "the self-consciousness of Jesus," meaning thereby his way of feeling and thinking about himself. Many passages will at once occur to mind in which is expressed his consciousness that he is the final answer to the world's prayer for help, that he alone can meet the needs of a sin-stricken people, that he is the world's Saviour. Contrast him with John the Baptist, the mighty prophet who was a forerunner and a herald and knew himself as such. Jesus Christ never in word or deed placed himself in such attitude. He always claimed to speak the final word of authority and to make the final offer of grace. He proclaimed himself as the Light of the world. He set himself forth as the goal of the past, the authority of the present, the hope of the future. It is the mission of the Spirit of God to glorify him and to transform man into his own likeness. The time is to come when all the kingdoms of the earth are to be under his benign reign. He is Lord of heaven as well as earth. He fills eternity as well as time. In the last great scene all nations are to be gathered before him for judgment, and his people are to dwell with him forever. There is never a hint of anything but finality in his utterances. That is the atmosphere of the New Testament. He never catches a glimpse of another in the future. He is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the ending, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Who Is Jesus Christ?

Several years ago a talented Jewess, who had been brought up in orthodox Judaism and then had drifted into the Ethical Society, began attending Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin's church in New York. Then one day she asked to speak with him. "I see it now," was her first remark. "What?" asked Dr. Coffin. "I see there is nothing that I can think of in the character of God that I do not see in Jesus Christ, and nothing that I need a God for that Jesus does not do for me." In telling of the conversation Dr. Coffin added: "To me that was the fullest and most satisfying description of what Jesus Christ is, arrived at by personal experience."